THE PEOPLE OF THE SALT LAKE VALLEY: A RICH AND DIVERSE HERITAGE

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The first Utahns were American Indians, who have lived in what is now Utah for about 12,000 years. When people of European ancestry began coming here in the mid-18th century, they found in the region five main groups and numerous sub-groups. Fairly fixed, but not rigid, boundaries existed between them. The Shoshones lived and hunted in northern Utah. The Goshutes lived in the arid area south and west of the Great Salt Lake and survived through ingenious use of available resources, including more than 100 varieties of plants, plus small animals, crickets, and other insects. Navajos inhabited Utah's southeastern comer, where they raised sheep. Southern Paiutes lived in the southwestern section of the state, and Utes occupied the eastern two-thirds. With the exception of the Navajos, all these groups were culturally related and spoke Shoshonean languages. In the 19th century, no Indians lived in the Salt Lake Valley (though perhaps 2500 years previously some had). The valley was a neutral zone separating the various Indian groups from one another. Today about 20,000 Native Americans make their homes in Utah, about two-thirds of them on reservations. The rest live in cities and towns throughout the state, with most of them, about 4000 in all, in Salt Lake City.

Permanent settlement of the Salt Lake Valley by people of European background began in July 1847 with the arrival of an advance party of several hundred Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who had come, as they said, to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Salt Lake City grew steadily, if not spectacularly, after that founding. It had a population in 1850 of about 6000, in 1860 of 8000, in 1870 of 12,000, and in 1880 of 20,000. A massive influx of population pushed the city's population to 53,000 in 1900. Throughout this period, the city had a large foreign-born population. In 1870, for example, 65% of Salt Lake families consisted of foreign-born parents and their children. In 1880, 37% of the city's residents were foreign-born. In that same year, by way of comparison, 40% of New York City's population was immigrants.

Most of Salt Lake's immigrants were from the British Isles and Scandinavia, and most were converts to the Mormon Church. During the 19th century, perhaps as many as 100,000 Mormon converts from other countries came to Salt Lake City. Some of them remained, but most of them settled in other parts of the state. Of that 100,000, more than 50,000 were from the British Isles and another 30,000 were from Scandinavia. Most of the others were from Canada and Western Europe, mainly Germany and Switzerland. Of those from the British Isles, the vast majority was from England, with some from Wales and Scotland and a handful from Ireland. Most of the Scandinavian immigrants came from Denmark and southern Sweden.

Most of these people came not as individuals, but as members of family groups. Though they were from all walks of life, they

fell mainly into three occupational categories: farmers, artisans and craftsmen, and unskilled laborers. The Mormon leadership did, however, frequently encourage the immigration of people with certain skills deemed necessary to build the Kingdom. Thus, in 1849, British missionaries were instructed to search out "blowers, moulders and all kinds of furnace operators to immediately immigrate to the valley without delay," and in 1852 church leaders specifically asked for iron workers, potters, woolen workers, comb makers, millers, and coal miners.

Most of them came as part of an organized migration to Zion. Rather than traveling on their own, they came under church sponsorship and supervision. Church leaders chartered ships and organized immigrants into self-governing and self-helping communities while they were in transit. Once in the United States, church agents met them and arranged for the overland journey to Utah, providing—in the days before the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869—teams and wagons, instructions for overland travel, and an experienced guide.

Of course, not all European immigrants to Utah were Mormons. There were others, particularly after 1870 as more and more non-Mormon groups carried on educational and evangelical missions. Another factor attracting non-Mormon immigrants was the booming economy of the state, especially its mines and railroads. By 1885, one-third of Salt Lake's population was non-Mormon, and there were a number of non-Mormon churches: Baptist, Congregational, Episcopalian (two), Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic.

Of the original advance party of Mormons who arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, three were black slaves. But black Americans had been a part of Utah's earlier history, too. In the 1820s, they had hunted and trapped for beaver throughout the region, and a black man had been a member of Captain John C. Fremont's two expeditions to Utah in the early and mid-1840s. By 1850, 50 blacks were living in the Salt Lake Valley, about half of them slaves and half of them free. In subsequent years Utah's black community grew slowly. The 1900 census showed 678 living in the state, most of them in Salt Lake and Uintah counties. At first they were employed mainly as domestic servants, but the railroads brought new job opportunities in the late 19th century and until 1940 were the major employers of blacks, most of whom worked as porters and waiters. World War II created new jobs and brought a further influx of black people into the state.

Today about 10,000 blacks live in Utah, mostly in the Salt Lake and Ogden areas. From the first, blacks met the same kind of prejudice and discrimination in Utah that they did elsewhere in the United States. Partly in response, they, like other minority groups, developed a rich social and cultural life, with their own clubs, community centers, fraternal organizations, newspapers, and churches. Churches were especially important. The first black church in Utah was Salt Lake's Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church founded in 1890. The Calvary Baptist Church was established soon afterward.

Toward the end of the 19th century, new immigrant groups began to arrive in Salt Lake City. Mainly from eastern and southern Europe and Asia, they were part of a large stream of 20 million people who reached the shores of the United States between 1880 and the beginning of World War I. They included Chinese, Japanese, Greeks, Italians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Slavs, Serbs, Turks, Slovenes, and others. After 1900, Spanish-speaking people and peoples from the Middle East—Lebanese, Armenians, Persians, Syrians, and others—began to join them.

These new immigrants to Utah were different from previous groups. Not only had they come from different parts of the world,

but most of them were not members of the Mormon church and had little interest in joining it. The vast majority were young, single men. (Of the nearly 4000 Greeks that the 1910 census counted in Utah, fewer than one dozen were women.) Also, they had often come to Utah by chance, not by design. Utah was where they happened to get a job, or where they had a friend or relative, or where they decided to get off a freight train after a long and exhausting ride. Most of these new immigrants intended to stay in this country only temporarily. They had left their homelands because of economic distress, and they planned to work only until they could save enough money to return and re-establish themselves.

Strangers in a strange land, these newcomers met with prejudice and discrimination in Utah, as they did elsewhere in the United States. The feeling was widespread throughout the nation that only the Anglo-Saxon race had the qualities necessary for American society to prosper and that the future of the country depended on it's retaining a relatively homogeneous population. To help counteract this prejudice, newly arrived immigrants tended to gather together in small colonies, so that segregated ethnic neighborhoods became a feature of Salt Lake City, as in other American cities in the late 19th century. In contrast, earlier immigrants to Utah did not form such neighborhoods. That would have been contrary to the idea of building the Kingdom, whose fellowship was supposed to override ethnic distinctions.

Not surprisingly, the first generation worked mainly at pick-and-shovel jobs on the railroads and in mines and smelters. Later they began moving into other kinds of work, including small businesses and the professions.

The Chinese, for instance, first came to Utah in the late 1860s as laborers on the transcontinental railroad. After its completion in 1869, some of them remained here, mostly in Box Elder County, working as section hands on the railroad. Gradually they moved to other parts of the state, and many began to operate small businesses. By the 1880s Salt Lake, Ogden, and Park City all had Chinese laundries and restaurants and Chinese neighborhoods.

By the early 20th century, a Japanese community had sprung up in Salt Lake City along a two-block area of First South between West Temple and 300 West. Within and around Plum Alley, which ran north and south between Main and State Streets connecting First and Second South, the Chinese developed a compact community of their own. Little Syria grew up around the area of Third South and 500 West, near the Denver and Rio Grande depot, and Italians were also concentrated on the west side of the city near the railroads, where many of them worked. The Bertolini Block, still standing today just south of the Salt Palace on West Second South, became their community center. Nearby, on a stretch of Second South between 400 and 600 West, was Greek-town. Within its two-block area were coffeehouses, grocery stores, rooming houses, and specialty stores that sold octopus, Turkish tobacco, olive oil, goat cheese, figs and dates. Two newspapers served the community, one a Greek-language paper, the other in English. Similar ethnic neighborhoods existed wherever new immigrants settled, including smaller communities in the Salt Lake Valley like Magna, Bingham, and Midvale.

These ethnic neighborhoods began to break up in the 1930s, largely because the U.S. Congress had passed legislation severely restricting further immigration. In addition, the city's immigrant population was no longer mainly young and male. In spite of their original intentions, most of the immigrants had not returned to their native lands, but had married, started families, and settled down to try to make a permanent life here. As they left

the mines and smelters and moved into businesses and professions, they also began to move into other sections of the city. Today, little is left of the old.

Since the end of World War II additional waves of immigrants have come to the Salt Lake Valley. Between 1950 and 1970, more than 42,000 Spanish-speaking people arrived, and they have now become Utah's largest ethnic minority. Most of them are Mexican-Americans from New Mexico and other Southwestern states, but there have also been immigrants from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and South and Central America. In addition a large number of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans come to the state each year as temporary migrant workers. During the 1960s they numbered about 8000 each year. Hispanics have actually lived in Utah for some time, however, first around the turn of the century as shepherds and ranch hands in San Juan County. More arrived between 1910 and 1917, seeking to escape the upheavals of the Mexican Revolution. The 1920 census showed 1666 Spanish-speaking people in Utah, mostly in the Salt Lake Valley and primarily employed by mines, nulls, and the railroads. In the 1960s, Polynesians from islands in the South Pacific began to arrive in Utah. Perhaps 12,000 have come in all, most of them settling in the Salt Lake Valley. The largest group is from Tonga and came mainly as Mormon converts. Others have arrived, though in much smaller numbers, from Samoa, New Zealand, Hawaii, and Tahiti.

In addition to religion, economic factors have played a role in their immigration here. In the 1960s, for example, unemployment in Tonga, excluding subsistence farming and fishing, was as high as 75%. Land was difficult to acquire, and inflation was high.

The latest group of immigrants, those from South-east Asia, began arriving in the mid-1970s after the long war in Vietnam ended. They include Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians, Thais, and Hmong. Of the 750,000 who immigrated to the United States, about 10,000 have come to Utah, settling mainly in the Salt Lake Valley. Most of them have been sponsored by American families, who have helped them find work and places to live. Many have been young people under the age of 16 who came alone or with relatives and wait for other family members to join them. Often the wait has been a long one. Life here has been at least as difficult for them as it was for earlier generations of immigrants. They work at basic entry-level jobs and face culture shock as they try to adjust to a way of life vastly different from what is familiar. Like earlier immigrants, they rely on their own communities while they struggle to adapt to new ways and to build lives for themselves. And while it is hard to predict future immigration patterns, it seems likely that citizens of other nations will continue to make the Salt Lake Valley their home—enriching our lives with their distinctive cultures and traditions.